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ABSTRACT

This paper puts in historical perspective and reviews current policy issues unique to private, historically black college. Their historical traditions and mission of service, the paper notes black private colleges currently enroll about 17 percent of blacks in higher education and award more than one-third of baccalaureate degrees earned by blacks. Reviewing financial trends and issues, the paper notes that most private black colleges tend to be poor; tuition traditionally have been low and the schools rely heavily on support from church denominations and from the United Negro College Fund. The balance between fundraising, grants, endowments, and tuition increases is seen as an on-going problem, as are issues of diversity and mixing of cultures on governing boards--both between races and between corporate and church representatives; and the need for more trustee involvement and board training. A recurring theme in the discussion of these issues is the advantage to be gained from cooperative programs with the business community and with large research universities. Other issues covered are faculty salaries, degrees earned, and professional development; faculty-student interaction; student enrollment trends, characteristics, and admissions policies; and public policy issues, particularly in regard to funding. (BF)

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Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Perspectives on the Current Status of and Emerging Policy Issues for Private, Historically Black Colleges

By Alan H. Kirschner

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With their long and rich traditions, private black colleges are among the academic elite of the historically black colleges and universities. They are devoted to academic excellence, to the importance of teaching and to a unique historical commitment to service and community development. While black colleges share many accomplishments and issues of common concern, they are also as diverse and distinct as their predominantly white institutional peers. Black colleges currently enroll about 17 percent of Blacks in higher education, and award more than one-third of all baccalaureate degrees earned by blacks.

Private black colleges tend to have limited financial resources. Unlike their more affluent institutional peers, black colleges for the most part cannot fall back on wealthy alumni, sizable endowments or large tuitions to meet their operating needs. Instead, they rely more on support from church denominations, from non-alumni individuals, and from the United Negro College Fund.

Developing partnerships with corporations should be a clear goal. If a prospective donor views the black college as that small struggling institution down the road, then fund-raising potential will be limited. But if that donor begins to see these colleges as the answer to some of the problems with which he or she is faced, then a real fund-raising opportunity can occur.

Although endowments at private black colleges have grown substantially in recent years, they are still far below the levels of other private colleges. Endowments are largely

conservatively invested in interest-bearing securities. Greater investment flexibility is needed wherever possible.

Tuitions at private black colleges are deliberately kept low in view of the low-income backgrounds of most of the students. Boards are reluctant to permit large tuition increases that might discourage students from applying.

Most voluntary support to private black colleges comes from church denominations and from the United Negro College Fund. Alumni support has increased steadily. Colleges that have aggressively and consistently solicited their alumni have had positive results.

Recent years have seen a trend toward somewhat less church representation and more corporate representation on the boards of private black colleges. There is more rotation of members, more board training and more board involvement in fund-raising. Mixing cultures on the boards (e.g. adding white members to all or mostly black boards, combining business and clerical involvement) raises difficult issues. Much of the future of private black colleges will depend on how effectively they manage this transition.

More than half of the faculty at United Negro College Fund institutions hold doctoral degrees and almost two-thirds are black. Faculty salaries trail those at all private four-year colleges, but are only slightly below those of church-related colleges in the South. Since black students attending black colleges are coming increasingly from diverse backgrounds, it is very important for faculty at these institutions to master a wide repertoire of teaching methods.

To enable students at private black colleges to take advantage of the full universe of programs available at larger institutions, cooperative programs will need to be expanded. More exchange programs are needed as well as feeder relationships between historically black colleges and major universities that have the physical resources and philosophical commitment to make those programs work.

During the past four years, UNCF enrollments have risen 16 percent, or twice the increase in total enrollment at private colleges and universities nationally. Ninety percent of the students receive financial aid.

The College Fund is deeply concerned with federal financial aid trends that have shifted aid from grants to loans in recent years, even for the lowest income aid recipients. Also of great concern is the threatened cutoff of loan funds to institutions with high default rates.

INTRODUCTION

It is always a little dangerous to attempt to generalize about trends pertaining to the private black colleges. While black colleges share many accomplishments and issues of common concern, they are also as diverse and distinct as their predominantly white institutional peers. In several cases, the differences are not just a matter of degree but are differences in kind.

Some of these colleges are located in small towns; others are in the hearts of fair-sized cities. Similarly, some serve a primarily rural student population; others have a significant number of youngsters from Northern cities. Several have large numbers of students from middle- and upper-middle-class families; all have students from very low income families, who tend to be the first in their families to attend college. Some have extensive graduate, professional and research programs; most are exclusively undergraduate institutions. Some were founded by white missionaries; others by black church conferences. Some are the only higher education game in town; others have to compete for attention with large state universities, private white colleges, community colleges, and/or historically black public institutions. Nonetheless, despite these sometimes significant differences in history, style, orientation and custom, I am occasionally going to take the risk of generalizing.

In this paper I will largely rely on statistics on United Negro College Fund member institutions, which are 41 private, fully accredited, four-year/graduate historically black colleges and universities. In total, there are 53 private historically black institutions in the nation. UNCF raises funds and provides services on behalf of these institutions.

TRADITIONS AND MISSIONS

Private black colleges were largely founded in the two or three decades following the Civil War. Most offer baccalaureate programs exclusively, some offer graduate/professional programs in addition to their undergraduate curricula, and a few offer programs exclusively at the graduate/professional level. In total, there are 95 historically black colleges and universities, with 53 private (5 two-year) and 42 public (4 two-year). All but a few are located in the South.

With their long and rich traditions, private black colleges are considered among the academic elite of the historically black colleges and universities. Five private black colleges (Xavier, Spelman, Howard, Morehouse and Oakwood) rank among the top ten colleges and universities in the nation in supplying black applicants to medical school. Private black colleges are devoted to academic excellence, to the importance of teaching and to the central position of learning on their campuses.

In addition, private black colleges have a unique historical commitment to service. As Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook, President of Dillard University, has pointed out, "It is hardly an accident that Martin Luther King, Jr. was an alumnus of Morehouse College rather than Harvard College and that the overwhelming majority of the leaders of the civil rights movement--nationally and locally--are graduates of black colleges." According to Dr. Cook, black colleges have a "dual mission." They are about human excellence and superior education but they are also about "the development of moral character and the production of better men and women for a more humane, decent, and open world."

Unlike some of their ivory tower counterparts, ebony tower institutions are squarely committed to human betterment and community development.

Despite their contributions, black colleges are still asked to justify their own existence. The rationale for their existence should be self-evident. Black colleges remain a crucial option in a pluralistic system of higher education. Their value involves their ability to preserve and share a subculture in a commonwealth of subcultures. Their value involves the fact that many black students prefer to be in a majority environment as they prepare for the outside world rather than be a minority of 3 or 4 percent. Studies have found that black students in black colleges experience less anxiety, greater leadership and social development and more cognitive growth than their black counterparts who attend predominantly white colleges. Black students want to be in an environment where they are able to excel without the distractions of actual or perceived hostility, and black colleges provide that environment.

Today, historically black colleges enroll about 17 percent of Blacks in higher education and award more than one-third of all baccalaureate degrees earned by blacks. While black colleges are not the answer for all or even most black students, they still represent a critical option for those who do attend.

FINANCIAL TRENDS AND ISSUES

While black colleges have many differences, all have shared one characteristic that has been pervasive throughout most of their histories--they tend to be poor. They are,

with few exceptions, experts at operating on the proverbial shoestring. Theirs is a history of constantly "making do" on very limited financial resources.

Unlike their more affluent institutional peers, black colleges for the most part cannot fall back on wealthy alumni, sizable endowments or large tuitions to meet the bulk of their operating needs. Instead they rely more heavily on support from church denominations, from non-alumni individuals and from the United Negro College Fund. Howard University remains an exception to the norm of low resource institutions - Howard receives approximately $180 million in unrestricted federal support each year.

Recent years have seen great fund-raising successes as well as the consequences of financial distress. Bishop College, a 110-year-old institution in Dallas, closed its doors in 1986, the first UNCF college to close since UNCF was founded in 1944. Clark College and Atlanta University were forced to merge to relieve financial pressures. Several other black colleges came close to shutting their doors but managed to survive. Last year Morristown College, a historically black junior college in Tennessee, closed.

Major gifts such as the $20 million Cosby gift to Spelman College and the $50 million challenge grant from Walter Annenberg to the United Negro College Fund set new standards for leadership gifts to black colleges. The Annenberg gift kicked off a $250 million UNCF Capital Campaign, a substantially larger goal than the $50 million capital campaign that UNCF held ten years earlier.

Endowment

During the past seven years, the total market value of endowments at the 41 private black colleges that are members of the United Negro College Fund rose 139 percent. One of the prime causes for the growth has been the federal government's

challenge grant program, which matches privately raised endowment funds with federal dollars.

Although the endowments at UNCF colleges have grown substantially in recent years, they are still far below the levels of other private colleges. In 1985-86, the latest year for which comparative data were available, the value of the average endowment per student at UNCF colleges was $6,192, or 31 percent of the $19,918 average at private four-year colleges nationally. Moreover, one-fifth of UNCF colleges hold endowment funds of less than $2 million each.

Endowments range in size from under $1 million (at four UNCF colleges) to more than $50 million (at Spelman), approximately $70 million (at Hampton) and almost $85 million (at Howard). The top four UNCF college endowments account for more than forty percent of the combined market value of UNCF college endowments.

Two-thirds of the investment portfolios of UNCF college endowments are conservatively invested in interest-bearing securities, compared with only one-third of the portfolios of other private colleges. Equities have easily outperformed interest securities in recent decades. UNCF college trustees need to permit greater flexibility in investing these funds for maximum growth whenever possible.

Tuition

Tuitions at private black colleges averaged $4,273 in 1989-90, less than half the $8,737 charged by private colleges nationally and 41 percent less than that charged by Southern private colleges. Tuitions are kept deliberately low at private black colleges in view of the low-income background of most of the students. Boards are reluctant to permit large tuition increases that might discourage students from applying.

One of the most critical problems in financing private black colleges is that only about 35-40 percent of their total revenues are generated from tuition, compared to 55 to 70 percent of revenues at private colleges nationally. Black colleges make up this gap through a precarious dependence on private gifts. To assure greater stability, efforts to attract more students from middle income families are essential.

In addition, despite the risks involved, and with caution, tuitions need to be increased more significantly than they have in the past. Moreover, colleges with enrollments under 1,000 students but with greater capacity for students should establish goals to reach a minimum of 1,000 students in the next few years.

Fund-raising

Most of the general operating support raised by UNCF colleges comes from church denominations and the United Negro College Fund. A recent survey of eleven UNCF colleges found that five of those institutions received 40 percent or more of their total voluntary support from church denominations. Church support ranged from about 70 percent of total voluntary support to virtually no church support.

Support from UNCF is more evenly distributed among UNCF colleges but amounts to approximately the same number of dollars as church support. But there has been a shift in the sources of UNCF support. Ten years ago almost half of UNCF support came from corporations. Today only about 20 percent of total funds raised comes from corporations, as individual giving has risen substantially while corporate growth has been slow. Most of the increase in individual giving has come through the annual UNCF telethon and through expanded payroll deduction efforts, largely in the public sector.

Developing partnerships with corporations should be a clear goal. If a prospective donor views the black college as that small struggling institution down the road, then fund-raising potential will be limited. But if that donor begins to see these colleges as the answer to some of the problems with which he or she is faced, then a real fund-raising opportunity can occur.

Alumni support directly to private black colleges has risen steadily during the past ten to fifteen years. In the mid 1970's alumni support to UNCF colleges amounted to only about 2 percent of total voluntary support. Today, thanks to more sophisticated development operations and more experienced development officers, alumni support accounts for almost 10 percent of total voluntary support to UNCF colleges. Still, alumni support at private black colleges would have to more than double for these colleges to receive roughly the same percentage of support from their alumni as do other private four-year colleges. Colleges that have aggressively and consistently solicited their alumni have had very positive results. Still, there are many examples of private black colleges that have done very little in alumni development, or are inconsistent from year to year in the quality of their appeals. Foundation incentive grants to encourage alumni giving have helped many colleges devote greater attention and resources to alumni giving.

Support from Title III, Part B (the Black College Act) of the Higher Education Act, has had a significant impact on strengthening historically black colleges, particularly in the areas of faculty and curriculum development, management improvement and, more recently, facilities renovation. More Title III support is needed to strengthen the academic programs, endowments and administrative capabilities of these institutions. Institutions serving large percentages of Native Americans and Hispanics are also seeking more Title III support. Such efforts can be supported if they are not in competition with

the increased needs of black institutions. In other words, minority institutions need to work together on this.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Recent years have seen a trend toward somewhat less church representation and more corporate representation on the boards of private black colleges.

Black colleges have traditionally had strong church, alumni and local representation on their boards. With few exceptions, they did not until recently have many people of wealth or significant representation from the corporate community or from foundations. Black college boards had very little rotation of officers and members. Members were selected because of their long devotion to the college or because of a leadership position in the church. The greatest challenge for many board members was remembering the names of their fellow trustees. The trustees' role was largely ceremonial.

Today there are far fewer boards with no rotation of members. There is more corporate representation, and more planning goes into the composition of the board. Many boards are reassessing the missions of their institutions and the role of the board in light of these changes.

In particular, there is considerably more board training. Several efforts have encouraged this. The Integrated Systems Approach to Effective Management (ISATEM) was a joint program of the United Negro College Fund and the American Council on Education designed to strengthen management systems at private black colleges. The Association of Governing Boards was one of several higher education associations that played a key role in the development of the program, particularly in board development.

New criteria from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have also placed greater emphasis on the need for more board training, evaluation and rotation of officers and members. The UNCF member presidents themselves have voted to hold workshops every two years for presidents and trustee representatives to come together and discuss issues of common concern and participate in seminars to maximize board effectiveness. These workshops were sparked by the large turnover in UNCF college presidents during the past five years. (More than half of UNCF college presidents have changed during this period.)

There is more trustee involvement in giving today in both their own giving and their asking others to give. While the president still raises most of the money, there is greater recognition that the president cannot do the job alone and must rely more on trustees and other volunteers for support.

There is more discussion of issues at board meetings and more involvement of board members on fiscal matters. Trustees spend more time on the selection of presidents. Even church-dominated colleges with strong bishops are more likely to conduct formal presidential searches. The bishops might not accept the advice of the search firm or committee, but there is still some progress.

Several key issues are emerging from enhanced trustee participation at private black colleges. With board members playing a more active role, the question emerges as to how the board measures up to the newer responsibilities. Is the board sufficiently diverse to have the expertise needed to make decisions? Is there too much clerical control? Is there local and regional business representation?

Mixing cultures on the boards of trustees raises difficult issues. Several of the boards have been all black and are adjusting to white representation. Combining business

and clerical involvement is perhaps more complicated than the racial mix. Women are still not well represented on the black college boards, although 60 percent of the student enrollments are female.

With greater wealth represented on the boards, more cultivation is needed to encourage not just current giving but looking to the future for bequests. UNCF is currently engaged in a program funded by the Lilly Endowment which trains college development officers in planned giving.

With more board member rotation comes the issue of whether new trustees and even existing members are being properly oriented. Are board members thoroughly familiar with the college? Do trustees have an opportunity to get to know their fellow trustees? This is particularly important with increased diversity. Are the trustees kept busy?

Black college boards are in a transition. Much of the future of these institutions will depend on how effectively they manage this transition.

ACADEMIC PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS

Characteristics of Black College Teachers

A profile of the faculty at UNCF colleges reveals that in 1988-89 more than half (52 percent) held doctorate degrees; almost two-thirds (63 percent) were black, and approximately 60 percent were male. Five years earlier the racial and gender compositions were about the same as in 1988-89, but the percentage of faculty with earned doctorates was only 43 percent.

Average faculty salaries at UNCF colleges trail those found at all four-year private colleges by a considerable margin. Salaries of full professors stand at only about two-thirds the level found at all private four-year colleges while the salaries of UNCF faculty at other ranks stand at approximately three-quarters of the national level. When comparisons are made with church-related colleges in the South, salary differences still exist but are largely eliminated.

In 1989-90, 20 percent of the UNCF faculty were new appointments and slightly more than one-quarter of the full-time faculty held tenured positions.

Teaching at Black Colleges

Until about 25 years ago, few white colleges in the nation and none in the South were ready to employ black teachers. Black colleges had a virtual monopoly on black faculty.

Today of course black faculty have a much wider array of choices. Many and probably most are lured to white colleges offering higher salaries, release time to do research and professional development opportunities--perquisites that many black colleges, where teaching loads are often high and funds low, cannot match.

But some black faculty who have attractive offers from white universities are choosing to remain at or begin their teaching careers in black colleges. They do so because they are dedicated to teaching black youths and also because they are more comfortable in a black college environment and share more interests with their colleagues. They have a strong interest in teaching at institutions that shape their curriculum and support services around the needs of black students. Still, it is difficult to recruit young faculty who are willing to take a financial loss.

Black colleges are primarily teaching-oriented as opposed to research-oriented institutions. Teaching is a calling in which many of the faculty find a deep sense of personal and professional satisfaction. Many excellent white teachers are in black colleges for this same reason. And a few of the private black colleges (e.g. Howard and Tuskegee) have substantial research programs in addition to their commitment to teaching.

To retain faculty at private black colleges, salaries will need to be more competitive. In addition, greater outreach for faculty development opportunities with large universities is important. The large universities need greater diversity for their faculty and black colleges need more opportunities for their faculty to participate in research and other scholarly activities. Two-way exchanges offering teaching and learning opportunities for faculty would be mutually beneficial.

Faculty - Student Interaction

An often overlooked teaching pattern at black colleges is that senior faculty members tend to teach lower classmen and women and are often responsible for introductory courses. They do so in part to lighten teaching loads but most do so to provide students with as solid a foundation as possible early in their college careers.

Since black students attending black colleges are coming increasingly from diverse backgrounds socially, academically and economically, it is increasingly important for faculty at these institutions to master a wide repertoire of teaching methods. They must be able to challenge gifted and better prepared students as well as work with the less gifted and sometimes poorly prepared students who may be the first in their families to attend college.

Faculty, regardless of race or ethnicity, should have knowledge of the history and culture of African-Americans to gain greater awareness of the students' own experiences and backgrounds and enrich faculty-student interaction.

Special Programs

Programs at private black colleges reflect the needs and interests of their students and communities. We are finding more colleges developing precollege partnerships with local high schools and junior high schools both to stimulate interest in college and as a strategy to increase enrollments. Special programs are expanding or developing in areas where blacks are underrepresented such as teacher education, math and science, engineering, and the humanities. At least one UNCF college offers a weekend program geared to black males in a neighboring public housing project and another offers a special program for single mothers. Many private black colleges have developed articulation programs that offer transfer information to students attending selected two-year colleges.

A few UNCF colleges have made great strides in internationalizing their campuses to promote greater global understanding and awareness among their students. Study abroad opportunities and international courses have been expanded. Still, most UNCF

colleges have no students studying abroad in any given year and only a few offer majors in international affairs.

To enable students at private black colleges to take advantage of the full universe of programs available in larger institutions, cooperative programs will need to be expanded. More exchange programs are needed as well as feeder relationships between historically black colleges and major universities that have the physical resources and philosophical commitment to make those programs work.

Degrees Awarded

In 1979-80, business and the social sciences were nearly equal in the percentage of degrees awarded, but since that year business has jumped far ahead of the social sciences and in 1988-89 accounted for over twice as many degrees as the social sciences. Approximately 29 percent of UNCF graduates earned business degrees in 1989, down slightly from 31 percent two years earlier. The percentage of education degrees has steadily declined from 20 percent in 1980 to 8 percent in 1989. Computer science had practically no graduates in 1980 but grew rapidly to account for 6 percent of graduates in 1988 and 4 percent in 1989.

It is interesting to note that while UNCF colleges only award about 10 percent of all baccalaureate degrees earned by black students nationally, in 1987 UNCF colleges awarded 26 percent of all undergraduate degrees earned by blacks in the fields of math and the physical sciences.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment Trends

During the past four years enrollments at UNCF colleges have risen 16 percent, or twice the increase in total enrollments at colleges and universities nationally.

UNCF enrollment gains also stand in sharp contrast with figures for black undergraduates nationally. Between 1982 and 1988 black enrollment nationally increased 1 percent; during this same period enrollment at UNCF colleges nationally increased 7 percent.

Still, enrollments at UNCF colleges average under 1,200 students/institution, with approximately half having enrollments under 800.

Fewer than 10 percent of UNCF students are classified as part-time, and this has remained relatively constant for the past decade. Nationally, most of the growth in higher education enrollments has occurred among part-time students.

With regard to college entrance rates nationally, the difference between white and nonwhite rates averaged nearly 13 percent in the early 1980's (as it had during the 1960s). Between 1987 and 1989 the gap has narrowed somewhat but is still short of the period of equity that existed in the late 1970s.

Blacks are 14 percent of the college-age population, just under 9 percent of total college enrollment, 6 percent of undergraduate degree recipients, and 3 percent of doctoral degree recipients.

The number of black 18 year-olds in the U.S. population is decreasing. During the next 5 years there will be an 8 1/2 percent decline in the total number of black 18 year-olds. Black colleges will need to diversify their recruitment efforts and in particular do

more to reach nontraditional age students if they are to maintain or increase their enrollments. Improved efforts to retain students who enroll will be very important.

Student Characteristics

Approximately 97 percent of UNCF students are black; 59 percent are female (and that proportion has risen from about 55 percent five years earlier); 96 percent are undergraduate students; as in past years about two-thirds of the students come from the twelve states where UNCF colleges are located (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia); 90 percent receive financial aid; 14 percent are transfer students; and most of the students are the first in their families to attend college. We are seeing more children and grandchildren of alumni enrolling, more students from middle-income backgrounds.

Admissions Policies

Although UNCF colleges show a considerable range in the percentage of applicants who are admitted to their freshman classes (31 percent to 100 percent), the great majority admit most applicants who wish to enroll. Overall figures show that more than 80 percent of all applicants are admitted and that over 40 percent of the admitted applicants later enroll.

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

Among the current public policy issues is the need to increase the minimum Title III grant from $350,000 to $500,000 to enable the smaller and more financially struggling institutions to have greater support, even at the expense of other black colleges.

The College Fund has opposed Administration and Congressional efforts to impose maximum default rates on Stafford loans. Instead, UNCF has suggested stronger enforcement of due diligence criteria in the collection of loans. In the budget reconciliation, historically black colleges and universities won an exemption through 1994 from the Stafford Loan cutoff provisions.

The College Fund will continue to initiate and support legislation that encourages federal agencies to increase grants and contracts to historically black colleges, and has been successful in this effort with such agencies as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Defense and the Agency for International Development.

The federal financial aid trend toward greater dependence on loans and less grant support has been of priority concern. In recent years, loans have replaced grants as the primary source of student financial aid at private black colleges. The College Fund strongly supports increased emphasis on grant support, particularly for the lowest income students.

During the past six years, institutional scholarships at UNCF colleges have risen 75 percent due to cutbacks in federal and state grants. This has meant less money available for library books, faculty salaries, etc. Public support for access to education is an irreplaceable investment.

Appendix A

Size and Scope of Private Black Colleges

According to the U. S. Department of Education, there are 95 historically black colleges and universities, of which 53 are private. Of the private black colleges, 49 are four-year and 41 are members of the United Negro College Fund.

Private black colleges enroll approximately 60,000 students, or roughly one-third of total enrollments at historically black colleges. They confer more than 7,000 degrees annually, also about one-third the total for all historically black colleges.

Appendix B

Resources

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Appendix C

The Author

Alan H. Kirschner is Vice President for Programs and Public Policy at the United Negro College Fund. Mr. Kirschner is responsible for the research, educational services, program development and government affairs departments, as well as the Moton Conference Center in Gloucester, Virginia. He has been with UNCF for sixteen years. Prior to becoming Vice President in 1986, Mr. Kirschner was Director of Research and Special Assistant to the President.

Mr. Kirschner earned his undergraduate degree at Vassar College, and M.A. in political theory from Columbia University and a law degree from St. John's University.

Mr. Kirschner is a former Trustee of Malcolm-King College in Harlem and currently is a member of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities' Commission on Policy Analysis. He is also a member of the Council of Independent Colleges' Black College Advisory Committee. Mr. Kirschner has authored several reports on private black colleges and has been a consultant to numerous foundations and corporations.